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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : Amembassy TAIPEI

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

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SUBJECT:

Impressions of Political Conditions in Ilan Hsien

SUMMARY: Ilan Hsien, though adjacent to Taipei Hsien, can be classed politically with the backward counties of East Taiwan rather than the prosperous and politically active flatland counties of the West Coast. It is conservative in outlook, and its people are concerned with local, rather than provincial or national political issues. Taiwanese antipathy toward the mainlanders (who constitute only a very small fraction of the population) appears to be minimal, and open friction seems most unlikely to develop, given continued satisfactory economic conditions. The Kuomintang has developed a pervasive local organization in Ilan which reaches well down toward the rice roots; the Party structure seems sufficiently well identified with the social welfare and administrative work of the county to give it a positive raison d'être and keep it from being merely a negative instrument of political control. Local government chiefs seem to find it useful and convenient to work within the KMT framework, as well as inconvenient or impossible to work against it. Opposition to the ruling Party would appear to arise in large part from persons whose political ambitions have been frustrated by the inability or refusal of the KMT to support their candidacies; a few outstanding individuals, notably Provincial Assemblyman KUO Yu-hsin, manage by reason of their personal prestige and following to win election to non-administrative posts on a anti-KMT platform; however, although such individuals are down sincere in their opposition to one-party rule per se, such local arguments would appear to count for little as votes in Ilan.

NOTE: The reporting officer met to a large and random selection of residents of Ilan and believes that the general impressions reported in this despatch are substantially accurate. However, there may be a slight unwitting bias in favor of the Kuomintang. Introductions to certain key officials in Ilan were supplied by an official of the Provincial Committee of the KMT, with the knowledge and approval of T'ANG Tsung, Acting Secretary General of the Party. No effort was made to seek out "opposition" political figures.

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General Conditions:

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Ilan Hsien, located on the northeast coast of Taiwan, comprises ten administrative sub-units (chen and hsiang) on a fertile alluvial plain and two very large sub-units on the steep northeastern slopes of the central mountain range of Taiwan. Most of the population (around 310,000) is concentrated on the coastal plain. The general appearance of the coastal area of Ilan Hsien is one of a fairly prosperous, intensively cultivated, and orderly countryside. A number of sizable industrial plants are located in Ilan: a cement plant, a paper mill, and a brand-new sodium bicarbonate factory scheduled to start production in the very near future. The mountain areas, particularly in the north, have benefited from the reforestation program carried out by JCRR.

Despite the general appearance of well ordered prosperity, the officials of Ilan Hsien and the rural townships claim that Ilan is financially one of the poorest of Taiwan's sixteen hsien. Ilan's difficulties are both natural and administrative in origin. The Speaker of the Hsien Council complained that Ilan does not benefit fiscally from the presence there of its industrial installations, since the direct tax revenues go to the provincial or central governments. Ilan Hsien's tax revenues, according to the Speaker, produce barely enough funds to pay for the personnel and operating expenses of the local government machinery. Other of the Hsien's problems are topographic in origin. Ilan has some of the steepest streams in Taiwan, (notably Cho Shui ch'i, which divides the hsien into northern and southern halves,) capable of flash floods, and requiring extensive and continuous work on dike systems. A great number of bridges are required for the road system, and according to the Hsien Council Speaker, there is currently a shortage of some 80 bridges. The natural problems are complicated, it is alleged, by the fact that the Provincial Government, for purposes of allocation of funds for river works, regards Ilan as not a part of the specially favored Eastern Taiwan region (Hualien and Taitung). At the same time, the complaint runs, the Provincial Government does not treat Ilan equally with the relatively flat west coast region for purposes of subsidies to road construction. Apart from the stretch of road between Ilan town and Suao, the hsien has almost no paved roads.

Political problems of intense concern in Taipei would appear, on the basis of conversations with approximately 30 individuals in Ilan Hsien, to be of little immediate interest to the residents of this Hsien. In regard to the issue of a third term for President Chiang only a few persons, mostly mainlanders at the top levels of the administration, seem to have any definite opinions. An official of the Kuomintang in Ilan Hsien said that one of the "services" which he was currently performing for the village people of Ilan was that

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of drafting telegrams to President Chiang in support of a third term. According to this official, the burden of the telegrams he was drafting was that the farmers are grateful for the improvements that have taken place in their livelihood since President Chiang's arrival in Taiwan, and hope for the President's continued leadership of the nation to insure further happiness and prosperity. However, no native resident voiced any such sentiments in the presence of the reporting officer. Comments by other officials and citizens of Ilan gave the impression that popular support for a third term arises, not out of any preference for Chiang over Ch'en Ch'eng, but from the prestige of the President's name and the fact that other GRC officials are less--if at all--well known to the common people.

Even an event so recently in the news as the CAF's air victory of July 5 did not appear to be of much personal interest to the people with whom the reporting officer talked. Only two persons, when asked what sort of national developments were of interest to the local people, volunteered a mention of the MIG shoot-down. The Strait crisis of last year was of apparently greater individual concern, though remarks of Taiwanese on this subject were somewhat evasive. At a school in T'ouch'eng Chen, a minor official of the chen government said that "of course, we Taiwanese hoped for a victory in the battle. However, we were worried about the fate of the soldiers on the islands." On the score of Communism, there was a good deal of volunteer comment. A number of persons, including local officials of T'ouch'eng and Wu-chieh chen, explained the Taiwanese antipathy to Communism as being traceable to the Japanese education received by the local people.

The real political issues of Ilan revolve around internal concerns. Elections for hsiang and chen (township) magistracies are 75 or 80% uncontested. Local elections, when contested, are decided on the basis of the voters' estimate of which candidate will more effectively carry out the promise (which all make) to favor "construction" in the home district. The voters' choice is made in the light of community standing and records of achievement, not of ideology, party affiliation, or oratory. The major hsien-wide "political" issue appears to be the conflict of local interest as between the part of the hsien north of the Cho Shui Ch'i and the part to the south. The most successful local political figure the reporting officer met, Speaker LIN Ts'ai-tien, is the only man who has been a member of the Council continuously since its beginning. He did not however, become Speaker of the Council, despite his prestige, until the present Council was elected, as the previous Hsien Magistrate was from the same northern town as Lin, and for both top hsien jobs to go to natives of one town would have been politically impossible. A point frequently made (by people south of the Cho Shui Ch'i) concerning the hsien magistracy elections next year was that all

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previous magistrates have been "northerners", and it would be only fair if the magistracy goes to a "southerner" in 1960.

It seems reasonable to suppose that the "larger" political issues of the national or provincial levels, such as the problem of the allocation of resources as between military and economic uses, must occasionally figure in Ilan politics at least to some extent. Certainly a man like KUO Yu-hsin, Young China Party Provincial Assemblyman hailing from Ilan, and a leading figure in the Provincial Assembly "independent" element, must introduce such issues in his campaign speeches. However, no one to whom the reporting officer talked in Ilan Hsien volunteered any mention of such larger issues. The general impression was one of extreme village conservatism, carried almost to the point of apathy, so far as matters external to Ilan Hsien are concerned.

The Kuomintang-"Strength Through Service":

The impression of the KMT that is apt to be received in Taipei is of an octopus-like creature with the bulk of its body concentrated in Taipei and its tentacles reaching out to the hinterland, there to exercise a repressive control over the political life of the Province. Actually, if Ilan Hsien is representative, the KMT is more vegetable than animal, as it possesses a well-developed grass-roots structure. A few of the higher officials of the KMT in Ilan Hsien do in fact betray some of the attitudes which would be appropriate to the image of the KMT as an instrument primarily of political control and indoctrination.



The real strength of the KMT in Ilan would appear to be the place it has acquired in the day-to-day life and administration of the Hsien. The KMT headquarters in Ilan city does double duty as the "Ilan Hsien People's Service Station", though the people of Ilan refer to both manifestations as the "Tang-pu" (Party Headquarters). Li Yuan-yu is director of the "service station" as well as the ranking KMT official, but the real

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work of the organization is in the hands of a dedicated and relatively effective staff. The reporting officer spent a day and a half with Mr. CHAO Chung-wu, Principal (or Manager) of the "service station", visiting local government establishments, villages and farms throughout seven of the ten coastal chen and hsiang of Ilan Hsien. Mr. Chao is a dedicated, selfless person, a native of Hopei, with long experience in rural work in Inner Mongolia on the Chinese mainland. A salient feature of the Party's social work in Ilan is the establishment of a number of "pilot projects", called "Peoples Livelihood Realization Villages", throughout Ilan Hsien. In the company of Mr. Chao the reporting officer visited several of these village improvement projects, each with its community activities center, its nursery, and its meeting hall, and walked in unannounced on some 15 or 20 farm homes in the project villages. Mr. Chao took an immense personal pride in pointing out that each of the farm homes visited had a neat row of towels, wash basins, and toothbrushes, one set for each member of the household. At one rather large farm house, there were some forty such sets of personal hygiene equipment, each numbered in red paint. Mr. Chao asked a boy of six to pick out his set and was delighted when the youngster went immediately to basin No. 22. Other favorite objects of display were the surprisingly neat and almost odorless toilets, the neat but not odorless pig pens adjoined to most of the farm houses, and the kitchens.

Mr. Chao's attitude had its "old maidish" side, but the village improvement program in Ilan Hsien has scored measurable success in reducing the rate of instance of trachoma and other diseases; and it is through the contagious zeal of persons like Mr. Chao that the KMT has been able to share in the credit for these accomplishments. Of course, the village improvement program would have been impossible without the assistance of JCRR, ICA, and other agencies; nevertheless, the role of the KMT, thanks to people like Chao, is not merely the parasitic one of cashing in on the work of others.

On the political-administrative side, the approximately 250 KMT cells ("small groups") in Ilan, comprising some 5,000 members, appear to parallel the administrative structure of the Hsien. Cell No. 1, for example, comprises the top administrative officials of the Hsien. Lower cells proliferate down through the chen and hsiang and below them to the village (Li and Ts'un) and neighborhood level. In view of the 1957 decision to reduce the required frequency of local KMT cell meetings to once every two months, it might be supposed that the meetings are largely pro-forma and serve no practical purpose. This does not seem to be the case, at least in Ilan. On the blackboards in the offices of the local administrative chiefs, containing the schedule of the day's work, the notation "meeting of small group" was frequently to be seen. In a discussion between the Hsien Magistrate and the magistrate of T'ouch'eng Chen regarding the recent increase in the price of pork, the Chen magistrate remarked in passing

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"I was discussing this question in our small group meeting the other day and we all agreed that if pork prices rise, the price of poultry will also go up and the first thing you know the farmers will be feeding rice to their chickens and ducks.....". From a number of indications such as this it would appear that the KMT local organization is to some extent being used as a separate channel of coordination and contact between the government and its subsidiary organs down to the neighborhood level. Consciously or not, the KMT in Ilan appears to be developing something of the character of a pao chia system (or the tonari-gumi system of pre-war Japan), adapted to the administrative needs and structure of present-day Taiwan.

The social and administrative usefulness of the KMT adds to its ability to enlist practically all the local leadership in its ranks. Not only would a non-KMT local official be at a great disadvantage in dealing with higher levels of government, but his conduct of social and administrative work in his own area would be hampered. The most impressive Taiwanese that the reporting officer met in the course of his tour of Ilan was Mr. LIN Hung-yen, the Magistrate of Lo-tung chen. An ex-school principal, this man of about 45 is a vigorous, intelligent, well-educated man. He is thoroughly dedicated to improving the social as well as economic conditions of his area; he seems less proud of the larger industries in his area--a large paper mill, saw mills and a new sodium bicarbonate plant--than he is of a garbage conversion plant now under construction on the outskirts of the town, inasmuch as this plant, through the production of fertilizer and its contribution to environmental sanitation, will be of social as well as economic benefit. Lin, probably for entirely practical reasons, seems to have adjusted quite satisfactorily to life under the KMT. Lin is not only a Party member, but is also head of one of the Ilan Hsien supporting organizations for the Youth Corps and a director of the Armed Forces Service Association for Ilan.

The Opposition:

Given the grass roots organizational strength of the KMT, it is somewhat surprising that there should be any substantial opposition to the KMT on the local level in Ilan Hsien. In fact the opposition seems quite small, only five out of thirty-two members of the Hsien Council being non-KMT. Nevertheless, some anti-KMT political activity does take place in Ilan, including a certain amount of reported support for the Young China Party. The Hsien Council speaker said, for example, that until recently political campaigns in the township of Wu-chieh had been marked by considerable conflict between the KMT and the YCP. At the present time there is reportedly an agreed moratorium on such conflict, and the Speaker does not anticipate

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any significant trouble for the KMT in the next local elections. Such strength as the YCP has in Ilan Hsien would appear to be largely a matter of personalities and conflicts of political ambitions rather than a matter of organization. Kuo Yu-hsin, one of the outstanding members of the "independent" faction in the Provincial Assembly, and currently active in the effort to establish the Local Self-Government Study Group, was elected from Ilan Hsien as a YCP member. However, a number of Taiwanese officials in Ilan Hsien volunteered the comment that Kuo's political strength is his own, not that of the YCP; in fact the YCP manages to enjoy a limited success in Ilan thanks only to the patronage of Kuo and a few others. Other local politicians expressed the view that the major reason why there were any opposition candidacies in local election campaigns at all was the fact that some aspiring candidates were unable to obtain KMT endorsement. The KMT is afflicted with an "embarras de richesses" when it comes to aspiring candidates, and this causes some disgruntlement within the Party ranks. The strongest criticism of the KMT which the reporting officer heard during his trip was that of an aborigine politician in Tung-ao, a former member of the Hsien Council. Although himself a member of the Party, this former Councilman accused the KMT of "oppressing the political rights of the people of Taiwan." He was unable or unwilling to provide any concrete instance of such oppression, his complaint being that the KMT one-party rule was antithetical to the political doctrine of the "advanced democratic nations" and that the KMT prevented the people of Ilan from having a fair choice of persons to represent them. It seemed evident in this instance that the immediate cause of resentment was the KMT's refusal to endorse this man's candidacy in the last local elections.

Taiwanese-Mainlander Relations:

Of all the parts of Taiwan visited by the reporting officer, Ilan Hsien seems to have the least friction between Taiwanese and mainlanders. This is probably in large part due to the relatively small proportion of mainlanders in the total population. If there were strong anti-mainlander feeling, it would have a ready-made focus in the person of the present Hsien magistrate. The former Magistrate, KAN A-yen, a native of Ilan, was removed from office last year when charged with corruption. Kan was replaced temporarily by an official sent out from the Civil Affairs Department of the Provincial Government, a Mr. WANG Yueh-chiao, who is acting in Kan's stead until a final determination is reached in his case. Wang is a mainlander from Kiangsu. It might be anticipated under the circumstances that Wang would be the target of considerable resentment and that Kan would be represented as a Taiwanese martyred by the mainland regime. Since Kan's case is coming up for a final determination in the near future, there was a good deal of spontaneous discussion of the case among the people to whom the reporting officer

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talked. No one, however, seemed to have a good word for Kan. A number of local officials said that even if Kan should be found innocent of the corruption charges and technically entitled to resume his position as magistrate, he would have no chance in new elections next year. Other Taiwanese observers expressed apparently sincere hope that Kan would not be returned to this office for even the interim period before the next election.

The Magistrate of Lo-tung chen went so far as to say that in some ways the appointment of Wang Yueh-chiao from the Provincial Government was a good thing from the standpoint of local administration; Wang as an outsider, could take an "objective" view of the problems of Ilan Hsien, and was immune from the suspicion of bias because of his place of origin. A local man would of course hail either from north or south of the Cho Shui Ch'i, and a certain amount of regional bias would be inevitable. While the Lo-tung magistrate quickly added that "of course" a properly elected magistrate is preferable, in keeping with the principles of democracy, his praise of Magistrate Wang's objectivity appeared to be sincere. Wang himself is an effective politician who spends long hours in the countryside talking things over with officials at the lowest level and with the farm population. His personality has probably contributed to the relatively good odor of the mainlanders in Ilan.

Ilan Hsien is of course not entirely without Taiwanese-mainlander friction. Many of the Taiwanese to whom the reporting officer talked stressed the relative lack of friction, but a majority said at the same time that antipathy has not been entirely eliminated. There was a good deal of spontaneous reminiscing about the uprising of February 1947, in which Ilan was involved, although to a lesser degree than the western and southern parts of Taiwan. One of the reasons advanced for the uprising was the lack of a common language at that time. Several Taiwanese pointed out that this lack has now been overcome to a considerable extent, and some even went so far as to claim that assimilation of the mainlanders was well underway. However at least one Taiwanese, a young man of about thirty, remarked cynically that the "assimilation" was similar to the assimilation of the Manchu rulers of China, implying that the "assimilation" process in Taiwan was such as to leave the mainlanders as a still identifiable and still resented group at the top of the heap.

In general it is the reporting officer's impression that the state of Taiwanese-mainlander relations in Ilan Hsien is closer to the harmony indicated by a majority of the Taiwanese contacted

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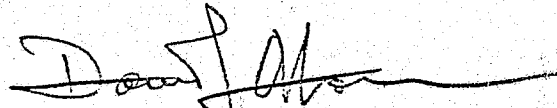
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than by the cynical remarks of the young man just quoted. Unless there is a marked deterioration in the economic wellbeing of Hsin, it would seem most unlikely that any significant friction is to be expected between the groups in that hsien.

For the Ambassador:



David L. Osborn
Counselor of Embassy for
Political Affairs

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